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## NEWS RELEASE

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December 11, 2002

### **Agents Seize Half Ton of Marijuana** *Driver Arrested with 1,000 Pounds in Car*

**CHULA VISTA, Calif.** – U.S. Border Patrol agents arrested a drug smuggler with nearly 1,000 pounds of marijuana in his overloaded Sport Utility Vehicle after he pulled into a gas station to fill up his tank.

Agents in the Jacumba area had noticed the white Ford Explorer leaving a remote location near the border at approximately 2:00 p.m. They followed the Explorer, and were assisted by a Border Patrol helicopter in maintaining surveillance. The driver drove his overloaded vehicle to a gas station at the Golden Acorn Casino. When Border Patrol agents approached the driver, they saw bundles of marijuana tightly stacked in the vehicle's interior.

"He had to be alone in that vehicle," said one agent. "There was no room for anyone else to sit. Every inch inside that car was packed with cellophane-wrapped bundles of marijuana."

The driver, a 32-year-old Hispanic U.S. citizen, initially claimed the vehicle belonged to a friend, then claimed not to know who owned the vehicle. He also denied knowing that 949.5 pounds of marijuana, with an estimated national street value of more than \$664,000, were packed all around him. The driver and illegal narcotics were turned over to agents from the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA).

Since October, Border Patrol agents in the San Diego Sector have seized more than 5,221 pounds of illegal narcotics worth an estimated \$3.65 million

~ USBP ~

*Digital photos and video available*